

Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Finding the Holy Spirit in Ephesians

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Dr. Mary Craig (Delivered by Stephen Craig)
Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.



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The Church in Ephesus was open to deep truth. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we find both doctrinal teaching and practical application.

Listen, first, to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:17. In it we find the Godhead, the Trinity. Paul asks the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, to grant the Ephesians the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He's asking that the Holy Spirit reveal what was planned and effected by God in the work of man's redemption with full comprehension and discovery. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our minds to comprehend and opens the eyes of our hearts to receive. Paul wants these believers to behold the beauty of divine things, things previously not perceived.

While natural man may have lingering traces of the image of God in reason, conscience, and the longing after immortality, he nevertheless is darkness and enmity. (1 Cor. 2:14; Romans 8:7) The unbeliever is alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18) and without the Holy Spirit does not perceive the truth of the gospel. It takes the Holy Spirit for one to see the worth of God and the truth related to Christ's atonement. It takes the Holy Spirit for one to see how God in Christ meets man's deepest needs and fills man's deepest lacks and longings. The natural man may speculate, such as a blind-born man might speculate about colors, but only one whose eyes are opened behold the glory in Christ's person and work. The effect is transformation.

Ephesians 2:17: **“Through Him [Christ] we both have access by or in one Spirit unto the Father.”** Both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father. That access is mediated by Jesus Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit. One Spirit indwells both and all true believers. Jesus is the meritorious Surety. The Holy Spirit is the life-giving agent who puts believers in possession of the whole redemption.

Ephesians 1:13: **“After that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance.”** The format is hearing, faith believing, being sealed. The Holy Spirit functions as a SEAL and EARNEST. The Holy Spirit puts His seal on only two things: “first, the finished work of Christ, whereby He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and second, upon His own work in the hearts of those who believe.” (A. W. Pink)

The Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit of Promise. We are marked. The Holy Spirit seals us. And the Holy Spirit given to us is the down payment of our inheritance. Ephesians 4:30 will warn us not to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed. This sealing comes after believing, next after faith. The impress of a seal implies a relationship to the owner of the seal; it is a token of belonging to that specific owner.

When you have a legal document, the terms and conditions are written down. On the last page, those entering the contract sign their names. You might see the word “SEAL” next to them. Then you might see for some documents, places for witnesses. Here the Holy Spirit writes God's laws on the heart (Hebrews 8:10) and then He seals the truth

and reality of His own work to the consciousness of the believer. The intent is to give assurance, to certify, and to ratify.

The Holy Spirit assures the truth of God's promises so that we are convinced. (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The Holy Spirit assures the believer that the believer has a personal interest in those promises.

In Ephesians 1:13 we read of the sealing of an inheritance. We have obtained this inheritance by faith, and after having this faith, we are sealed. The Holy Spirit assures **us** of the fact; He persuades us that this inheritance is ours. In "sealing," the Holy Spirit authenticates, certifies, and ratifies as the Spirit of Promise. He is the Promise, the Promise of the Father (John 14:26; 15:26, e.g.). He works by means of the promises. He acts according to the New Covenant, which is a Covenant of Promise (Ephesians 2:12). He seals a sense of the love of God and gives believers a view of their interest in Christ by the Word of Promise. He sealed Christ (John 6:27) and consecrated Christ to the work of redemption.

The sealing enables a person to perceive the Spirit's work in the soul and infer his regeneration. If I see and feel something about me being transformed, I look for what did that. Then I'm led to Galatians 5 and voila. Intuitively, I begin sensing the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit. "If I have any hope wrought in me, either by looking to Christ's blood or perceiving grace in me, it is by the power of the Spirit (Romans 15:13)." (A. W. Pink)

Thus believers are God's inviolable property. In the spirit world, that Seal is seen. The believer stands on a sure foundation. The enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit has done it. (2 Timothy 2: 19; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 6:18) In addition, the Holy Spirit is called an Earnest, a foretaste, a down payment as it were. (Ephesians 4:14)

Ephesians 3:16, 17: Paul prays a second prayer for the Ephesians to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, in order that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. The faith that unites to Christ and saves is not someone's mind assenting to the gospel; it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the Spirit of Grace. The Holy Spirit calls, convicts, convinces, and converts, quickens and makes alive. In sanctification, He corrects and conforms the believer to the image of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit works faith. John Flavell said, "The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith."

The Holy Spirit strengthens the believer by giving him a share in the benefits and blessings which Christ procured. He confirms faith and love so that the believer becomes conscious of the indwelling of Christ.

The Church is the habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22) and the Church is one body and one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). The Church is warned not to grieve the Holy Spirit by certain thoughts, words, and actions/deeds. Believers are to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Paul warns believers against vindictive passions, against intemperance, lack of control, and/or addictive behaviors; and to replace sinful habit patterns with the fullness of the Spirit, who only satisfies the soul. (Ephesians 5:18)

But why would Paul exhort Christians to be filled with the Spirit when it is God alone by whom the Spirit is given? George Smeaton's answer to this is: "It is of God's gracious gift when the Spirit replenishes any soul. But it is also a subject of exhortation. This is

of the same nature with the exhortations in the Epistle to the Galatians: walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25). The Father, in the covenant, provided for the restoration of the Spirit; the Son procured the Spirit by His satisfaction, and lives to confer the gift; and we have only to receive and make room for Him daily, neither resisting nor grieving Him away from the heart.” (George Smeaton)

In Ephesians 4:1-4, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We learn to reverence the work of the Holy Spirit in us and in others. Consider the words “discrimination” [the observing of differences], “combination” [the observing of harmony amid apparent diversity], and “classification” [the observing of the unity of the Spirit as distinguished from unity of custom, of church, or choice, or culture]. Can there be harmony amid diversity in the Body of Christ? Do we have faith in the power of love to maintain the unity of the Spirit in living union amid the things that separate? Fellowship has a place and so does yielding to the Spirit, along with praying for one another. We contemplate the love of God for us, and we learn the exhortation of Ephesians 4:17-32, to forgive, to put off certain behaviors and put on Christ.

In thinking about Ephesians 5:15-20, we might think of a case, like filling a reservoir, where the filling would result from a quiet inflow over time or perhaps in a few hours. We are filled and being filled.

The power of the Holy Spirit’s infilling might come suddenly or slowly over time. However, an experience of sudden enthusiasm and joy and intensity of the Spirit may nevertheless prove superficial compared with simple trust and obedience, and walking in the consciousness of the Holy Spirit’s presence. There can be room for both in the Christian life and in church history. (e.g. Acts 2:3, 4; Acts 4:31; Acts 7:55; Acts 9:17; Ephesians 5:18.)

We can identify seven actions in Ephesians 5:15-20 which might affect being filled with the Spirit: conviction, surrender, emptiness, waiting, longing, discovery, and confession.

Paul had said that in Christ, having believed, believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. The Spirit was already received. “It is by the faith of Jesus, whose baptism with the Spirit has as distinct a commencement as His cleansing with the blood, but is also maintained by as continuous a renewal, that the inflow will grow ever stronger until it comes to the overflowing.” (Andrew Murray)

¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:1-5 BBB

Jesus had a deep calm of certainty and consciousness of who He is, what He had been sent by the Father to accomplish, and where He was going. We also need assurance of who we are in Christ, what Jesus accomplished in our place and stead, and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We must strongly desire to keep in step with the Holy Spirit as God grants grace.

⁹This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we remain [abide] in Him, and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷In this way, love has been perfected among us, so that we may have confidence on the Day of Judgment; for in this world we are just like Him. 1 John 4:9-17 ESV

Amen.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 NKJV

Mary Craig, D. Min.

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